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Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 CA-01 L-01 SCS-01 PM-03
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----------108588 301125Z /20
R 291136Z SEP 77
FM AMCNSUL CAPE TOWN
TO AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 6462
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 1417

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CASC, PINT, BC, SF, RH
SUBJ: REPATRIATION OF US CITIZENS EX-RHODESIA

REF: SECSTATE 186566

1. DURING HIS RECENT VISIT HERE, BLS COUNTRY OFFICER MCCORMICK RAISED WITH ME THE POSSIBILITY OF A LARGE NUMBER OF US CITIZENS NOW SERVING AS MERCENARIES IN THE RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES DESERTING AND APPLYING FOR CONSULAR ASSISTANCE IF A SETTLEMENT IS NOT REACHED AND THE SECURITY FORCES' POSITION DETERIORATES. I UNDERSTAND THAT THE ISSUE HAS BEEN DISCUSSED WITH AF AND SCS IN THE DEPT AND WITH AMBASSADOR NORLAND. AS REGIONAL CONSULAR ADVISOR, I FULLY CONCUR THAT THIS IS A SERIOUS POTENTIAL PROBLEM WHICH, SO LONG AS THE ZAMBIAN BORDER REMAINS CLOSED AND THE SAG NOT PREPARED TO ASSIST DESERTERS, IS LIKELY TO FALL PRIMARILY ON EMBASSY GABORONE.

2. OUR CURRENT ESTIMATE IS THAT UP TO 500 AMERICANS
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MAY BE SERVING AS RHODESIAN MERCENARIES. IF, AS REPORTS INDICATE, THEY ARE PAID AT ROUGHLY STANDARD RHODESIAN ARMY RATES, MANY ARE UNLIKELY TO HAVE FUNDS AVAILABLE TO RETURN TO THE US WITHOUT REPATRIATION ASSISTANCE OR LOANS. MCCORMICK BELIEVES THIS COULD CREATE SERIOUS POLITICAL EMBARRASSMENT FOR GOB, WHICH IS ALREADY UNDER DOMESTIC PRESSURE TO PERSUADE THE US

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TO ACT MORE FIRMLY TO PREVENT ITS CITIZENS FROM SERVING AS MERCENARIES. IN ADDITION, RECENT TIGHTENING OF BOTSWANA LAWS ON THIS SUBJECT (REFTEL) COULD RESULT IN TOUGH SENTENCINGS RATHER THAN EXPULSIONS AS PROHIBITED IMMIGRANTS AS IN ISOLATED SINGLE CASES IN THE PAST.

3. NORMAL REPATRIATION PROCEDURES, INCLUDING MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS LAID OUT IN 7 FAM 375.41 TO ATTEMPT TO CONTACT NEAREST RELATIVES OR OTHER POTENTIAL DONERS BEFORE GRANTING ANY REPATRIATION LOAN, ARE LIKELY TO PROVE INADEQUATE IF LARGE NUMBERS OF POLITICALLY SENSITIVE CASES ARISE ON URGENT BASIS. JOHANNESBURG MAY WELL RECEIVE SIMULTANEOUS UPSURGE OF PROTECTION CASES (INCLUDING NON-DESERTERS).

4. WHILE PROVISIONS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR ORDERLY DEPARTURE OF US CITIZENS IN SETTLEMENT PROPOSALS, I BELIEVE PRUDENCE DICTATES THAT WE BRING CONTINGENCY PLANNING NOW FOR POSSIBLE PROBLEMS OUTLINED ABOVE. WOULD APPRECIATE GABORONE'S COMMENTS ON FOLLOWING PROPOSALS:

IN LIGHT OF SERIOUS POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND SENSISTIVITY OF THE BOTSWANA GOVERNMENT TO THE PRESENCE OF US EXPATRIATES FROM RHODESIA, AND THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF ITS ABILITY TO MAINTAIN ITS HARDLINE IMAGE IN THE EYES OF THE OTHER FRONTLINE STATES, CONFIDENTIAL

I STRONGLY RECOMMEND DEPT GRANT ON A TEMPORARY BASIS AUTHORITY TO EMBASSY GABORONE, SUBJECT IN EACH CASE TO AMBASSADOR MORLAND'S OR CHARGE'S PERSONAL APPROVAL, TO DISBURSE SUCH FUNDS AS REQUIRED TO AFFECT THE IMMEDIATE AND DIRECT REPATRIATION OF CITIZENS CROSSING INTO BOTSWANA FROM RHODESIA WHOSE LIVES AND/OR PERSONAL FREEDOM IS HELD TO BE IN DIRE JEOPARDY FROM ANY DELAY IN THEIR IMMEDIATE REPATIRATION FROM BOTSWANA. AMBASSADOR'S PERSONAL CONTROL WOULD ASSURE THAT THIS TEMPORARY AUTHORITY FOR REPATRIATION FUND DISBURSEMENT IN SUCH CASES ON AN URGENT BASIS WOULD NOT BE ABUSED. CONCERN OF MEMBERS OF CONGRESS IN PROTECTION CASES CANNOT BE OVERESTIMATED IF MOST RECENT CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS SERVE AS ANY GUAGE.

5. DURING AN ORIENTATION VISIT TO GABORONE LAST SPRING FORMER CONSULAR OFFICER WILLIAM POPE BRIEFED ME ON PROBLEM AFFECTING EX-RHODESIAN ARMY PERSONNEL ENTERING BOTSWANA AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF ITS GROWTH. IT APPEARS THAT ISSUE IS LIKELY TO BECOME CRITICAL AS RHODESIAN CONFLICT CONTINUES TO ESCALATE AND IN LIGHT OF EFFECTS OF BOTSWANA SECURITY LEGISLATION

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